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SUBJECT: CPV WRAPS UP 8TH PLENUM -- DEFENSE, SALARY

REF: A. FBIS SEP20030714000009 B. HANOI 1756

- C. HANOI 0175

[1](#)1. (U) The Communist Party of Vietnam's (CPV) Ninth Central Committee held its eighth plenum in Hanoi July 2-12, with major addresses by General Secretary Nong Duc Manh and issuance of a formal communique. (Ref a provides translation.) The major themes, which CPV insiders said had been determined months -- perhaps even years -- in advance, were national defense strategy as well as salary and social insurance issues. (Ref c reported on the CPV's seventh plenum, which focused on land, minorities, and religion.)

[1](#)2. (SBU) The full text of the resolution on national defense strategy has yet to be made public, but the communique described its contents at length. It repeatedly noted the need to reassess national defense "in the new situation," while highlighting successes in protecting national sovereignty, the leadership of the Party, and the socialist regime over the past decade. When asked where the CPV viewed new threats arising, one Vietnamese newspaper editor privately admitted to Pol/C that they were "from inside," not from external forces. According to the plenum communique, the Central Committee also highlighted that "strengthening the Party is the key task" along with upholding the Party's "absolute and direct leadership" in ensuring national defense and security. It noted as well the importance of a favorable international environment and the "core task of economic development" in pursuing Vietnam's goals.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Embassy contacts indicated a lively debate on salary and allowances issues, with some stiff resistance to o
CPV proposals to abolish subsidized and/or free housing and to diminish perks like automobiles for senior cadres. The communique made no explicit reference to these issues, but cited past progress in "eliminating the system of paying wage and allowance in kind and replacing it with cash" and set the goal of "overcoming the subsidization practice." The communique also admitted the need to make salaries more attractive, to reward productive service, and to discourage "earning through illegal and irrational means." According to one contact, the policy on housing will be gradually implemented over the next decade, accompanied by increased salaries to offset these new expenses.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Embassy will continue to try to obtain further insights into the contents and significance of the plenum and its decisions, although CPV contacts are often quite close-mouthed about such "internal" issues. Sources robustly denied that any major personnel deliberations had d
been in the works at this plenum, as suggested in ref b. The twin themes were a rather odd mix, but reflect both CPV sensitivity to perceived threats to its leadership and a recognition of the need to update its handling of cadres in light of current economic realities, which increasingly have lent themselves to corruption and a corresponding weakening of the CPV's prestige and legitimacy.

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